

Andy Irvine's version: lyrics

Moreton Bay

I am a native of the land of Erin
That was early banished from my native shore
On the ship Columbus went circular sailing
And I left behind me the girl I adore
On the bounding billows that were loudly raging
Bold sea mariners our course did steer
We were bound for Sydney our destination
And every day cold irons wore

Chorus

O Moreton Bay you'll find no equal
Norfolk Island and Emu Plains
At Castle Hill and cursed Toongabbie
And all Time Places in New South Wales.

When I arrived it was in Port Jackson
And I thought my days would happy be
I soon found out I was greatly mistaken
I was taken as prisoner to Moreton Bay
For three long years I was beastly treated
And heavy Irons on my legs I wore
My back from flogging it was lacerated
And oftimes painted with crimson gore

Like the Egyptians and the ancient Hebrews
We were oppressed under Logan's yoke
Till a native Black there he lay in ambush
And he gave the tyrant a mortal stroke
Now fellow prisoners be exhilarated
That all such monsters such a death may find
And when from bondage we are liberated
Our former suffering shall fade from mind.

Traditional Arranged by Andy Irvine

Andy's version: tune

As transcribed by Bill Buttler

Moreton Bay

Andy Irvine arrangement

Verse:

I am a na - tive of the land of Er-in that was late - ly ban - ished
5 from my nat - ive shore. On the ship Col - um - bus - went cir - cle
10 sail - ing and I left be - hind me the girl that I a - dore.
14 On the bound - ing bill - ows a storm went rag - ing, bold sea mar - in - ers
19 ou - r course did steer We were bound for Syd - ney our dest - in -
24 - at - ion and - ev' - ry day - cold ir - ons wore.

Refrain

29 O More - ton Bay you'll find no eq - ual, Nor - folk Is - land
33 and E - mu Plains, Cas - tle Hill - and cursed Toon -
38 - gab - by and - all Time Pla - ces in - New South Wales.

Andy's version: Bill Buttler's chords

Note: designed for Capo 7 on guitar

Moreton Bay

Andy Irvine arrangement
Bill Buttler's guitar arrangement
Capo 7 for original key (D)

Verse:

The musical score for the verse is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of seven lines of music, each with a line of lyrics underneath. Chord symbols are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: "I am a na-tive of the land of Er-in that was late-ly ban-ished from my nat-ive shore. On the ship Col-um-bus - went cir-cle sailing and I left be-hind me the girl that I a-dore. On the bound-ing bill-ows a storm went rag-ing, bold sea mar-in-ers ou-r coursed id steer We were bound for Syd-ney our dest-in-ation and - ev' - ry day - cold ir - ons wore."

1 I am a na-tive of the land of Er-in that was late-ly ban-ished

5 from my nat-ive shore. On the ship Col-um-bus - went cir-cle

10 sailing and I left be-hind me the girl that I a-dore. On the bound-ing

15 bill-ows a storm went rag-ing, bold sea mar-in-ers ou-r coursed id

20 steer We were bound for Syd-ney our dest-in-ation and -

25 -ev' - ry day - cold ir - ons wore.

Refrain

The musical score for the refrain is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of three lines of music, each with a line of lyrics underneath. Chord symbols are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: "O More-ton Bay you'll find no eq-ual, Nor-folk Is-land and E-mu Plains, Cas-tle Hill - and cursed Toon-gab-by and - all Time Pla-ces in - New South Wales."

29 O More-ton Bay you'll find no eq-ual, Nor-folk Is-land

33 and E-mu Plains, Cas-tle Hill - and cursed Toon-

38 gab-by and - all Time Pla-ces in - New South Wales.

Andy's version: recording

Andy's recording on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phFDfYl4whU>

Andy's comments:

This is one of the best known Australian Convict Ballads. Captain Patrick Logan was the cruel Commander of Moreton Bay Penal Colony between 1826 and 1830 when he met his death at the hands—and spears—of a party of Aboriginal Hunters. He was found buried face downwards in a shallow grave—“Looking at Hell, where he was surely bound”. The convicts at Moreton Bay went nearly insane with joy at the news of his death. My good friend Kevin Bradley, who is Sound Archivist at the National Library of Australia in Canberra invited me to learn and sing this song at the Woodford Festival in Queensland in 1998. The original was recorded by Simon MacDonald of Creswick, Victoria who lived from 1907-1968.

Background information

Copied from <https://mainlynorfolk.info/wyndham-read/songs/moretonbay.html>

Martyn Wyndham-Read sang Moreton Bay in 1963 as the title track of his, Brian Mooney's and David Lumsden's Australian album Moreton Bay, in a Melbourne Town Hall live recording on the 1964 album Australian Folk Night, in 1970 on his Trailer album Ned Kelly and That Gang, and in 1986 on his Greenwich Village album Across the Line.

John Kirkpatrick sang The Convict's Lamentation ['the English version'], and Dave de Hugard sang Moreton Bay in 2003 on the Fellside anthology celebrating English traditional songs and their Australians variants, Song Links. The album's booklet commented on the English variant:

This is a song that would repay study by a folklorist-historian, a study much longer than the little that can be offered here. The song presumably originated in Australia, shortly after the killing of Patrick Logan, first superintendent of the convict establishment on the banks of the Brisbane River in south-eastern Queensland. Soon after the first penal station was established at Port Jackson (on a site which is now more or less the centre of the city of Sydney), other penal stations were established for recalcitrant prisoners. Emu Plains is now a western suburb of Sydney, Toongabbie and Castle Hill north-eastern suburbs. Port Macquarie is a flourishing town on the lower north coast of New South Wales, whilst Norfolk Island—perhaps the most notorious of all for brutal treatment of convicts—lies off the coast of New South Wales. A version written possibly by an Irishman, presumably a convict, seems to have become well known soon after the killing of Logan. The bushranger Ned Kelly quoted from it in the rambling document called the Jerilderie letter, which he dictated in 1879.

The tunes used for Australian versions and the one used for the present English version all belong to the same tune cluster (also used for some versions of the widespread weaver's song called The Calton Weaver; this song has been recorded in England but is better known in Scotland and Ireland). No version of the Australian song, Moreton Bay, seems to have made it back to Ireland, so it is rather curious that Ralph Vaughan Williams should have recorded the present English version from the shoemaker and prolific source of folk songs, Henry Burstow, in 1903 [VWML RVW2/4/14]. Burstow (1826-1916) was a major source singer with a repertoire of some 420 songs. Ralph Vaughan Williams noted 33 from him and Mr Burstow also gave songs to Lucy Broadwood and W.H. Gill.

Vaughan Williams did not publish the song during his lifetime. It was published by Roy Palmer in 1983 [in Bushes and Briars], with some lines borrowed from a version published by the Australian scholar Hugh Anderson. John Kirkpatrick has added a few changes of his own.

Background information continued

and on the Australian variant:

Much of the background concerning this song has been noted in connection with the English version, The Convict's Lamentation. A version of the song put together by John Manifold, and published as one of his Bandicoot Ballad Broadsides, mentioned earlier, became much favoured by singers of the folk song revival in Australia. Manifold explained in his book Who Wrote the Ballads? that he had heard fragments of the text from a number of friends, who all used some version of the tune used for the Irish song Youghal Harbour. When he put the fragments of text together he found that his completed text looked much like one published much earlier in a book by Jack Bradshaw, the self-styled "last of the bushrangers". He might have added that the form of the tune he used was practically identical to the skeletal tune for Youghal Harbour printed by Colm Ó Lochlainn in his first collection of Irish Street Ballads.



Captain Patrick Logan was Commandant at Moreton Bay penal settlement from 1825 until his death in 1830. It is said that this man incurred the hatred of every convict in the settlement because of his harsh discipline. (this is presumed to be from the convicts point of view)

Patrick Logan was in many ways quite an extraordinary man. He was a Queensland explorer who discovered the Logan River, climbed Mount Lindsay and covered much of Brisbane Valley on his trips; it was on one of these explorations that he was killed on 17th October, 1830. As he was alone it is not known if Aboriginals or Convicts murdered him.

The 'English' version of the song

'The Convict's Lamentation' as sung by John Kirkpatrick to yet another melody

- 1 Oh I was born in the land called England,
Now transported from my native shore,
And like Columbus in his circle sailing
Left behind the girl that I adore.
- 2 Through bounding billows that were loudly raging
Like a mariner bold my course did steer;
Bound to Bermuda, my destination,
Till at length that harbour did appear.
- 3 There we joined hands in congratulation
For safe arrival from the briny waves;
But I soon found out I was mistaken
For I was transported to Moreton Bay.
- 4 There every morning as the day was dawning
To trace from Heaven that falling dew,
Up we all started at a moment's warning
Our daily labour to renew.
- 5 As I walked out one summer's morning
I paid no heed to where I took my way;
I paid no heed to where I wandered,
By Brisbane water I chanced to stray.
- 6 In silent solitude and meditation
As I stood watching of the flowing tide,
I spied a convict, he was loud complaining,
The tears of anguish down his cheeks did glide.
- 7 Saying, "I've been a prisoner at Port Macquarie,
In Norfolk Island and Emu Plains,
In Castle Hill, likewise Toongabbie,
In all these places I have worked in chains.
- 8 "But in all those places of condemnation,
Each penal station in New South Wales,
To Moreton Bay I can find no equal,
Excessive tyranny each day prevails.
- 9 "Now I am bereft of all consolation
Yet hope of liberty for me remains;
I am behoved in tribulation,
Infused with misery by wearing chains.
- 10 "Yet I have once more for to cross the ocean
And leave this station called Moreton Bay,
Where many a man through downright starvation
Now lies mouldering all in his clay.
- 11 "Like the Egyptians and ancient Hebrews
We were oppressed under Logan's yoke,
Till a native black lying there in ambush
Did give our tyrant his mortal stroke.
- 12 "Now fellow prisoners, be exhilarated,
Your former sufferings though bear in mind.
Where from bondage you are extracted
You will leave those tyrants far behind."

Recording available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzTwbe4vuqE>
Well worth listening to – a beautiful rendition with concertina and voice.